(a) whether it is a fact that a Subsidiary Company in the name and style of Air India Transport Services Ltd. (AIATSL) for providing ground handling services has been introduced by Air India;

(b) whether it is a fact that there is no Cabinet approval for the introduction of AIATSL and that no contract has been signed for providing ground handling with either Air India or any other Foreign Airlines; and

(c) if so, the reasons for these employees being paid salaries for several months without working for a single day?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVILAVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The process has already been initiated for obtaining approval of the Cabinet to form a subsidiary company named Air India Air Transport Services Limited (AIATSL) for providing ground handling services. No contract has yet been signed by AIATSL for providing ground handling services either to Air India or to any other Foreign Airlines.

(c) As on 1st July 2004, the company has 34 Customer Agents, 14 Loaders and 6 Cashiers. The Customer Agents have undergone training, which is a pre-requisite for their job functions, at Staff Training College in Mumbai. They are also being trained at Marketing Cells for familiarization with systems and procedures. As far as Loaders and Cashiers are concerned, they have been deployed in Air India's perishable cargo operations in Mumbai and have been carrying out their assigned job functions.

Increase in Tourist Inflow

2206. SHRI RAMAMUNI REDDYSIRIGIREDDY:

SHRI K. RAMA MOHANA RAO:

Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have any plan to increase the present tourist inflow of 3 million to 10 million in the next two years;

(b) whether Government have any plan to extend special economy study package tours for students coming from abroad;

(c) if so, the details thereof;

(d) whether the Ministry of Tourism propose to issue a common visa for SAARC countries which will also help in increasing the tourist flow into the country; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM (SHRIMATI RENUKA CHOWDHURY): (a) Foreign tourist amvals to India during the year 2003 have been estimated at about 2.75 million. The objective of the Government is to promote tourism and to increase the tourist inflow in the country. No targets as such are fixed.

The Department of Tourism, Government of India has initiated a number of short-term and long-term Plans to promote tourism such as:—

- Positioning and maintaining tourism development as a National priority activity;
- Enhancing and maintaining the competitiveness of India as a tourism destination;
- Improving India's existing tourism products and expanding these to meet new market requirements;
- Creation of world class infrastructure;
- Special thrust to rural and small segment tourism;
- Development of tourism circuits and tourism-cum-cultural hubs.

In addition, the Government is also implementing the following measures to attract more foreign tourists to India.

- Direct approach to the consumers through Electronic and Print media through the "Incredible India" Campaign.
- Creation of World Class Collaterals.
- Centralized Electronic Media Campaign.
- Direct co-operative marketing with the Airlines, tour operators and wholesalers overseas.
- Greater focus in the emerging markets particularly in the region of China, North East Asia and South East Asia.
- Participation in Trade Fairs & Exhibitions.
- Optimize Editorial PR and Publicity.
- Use of Internet and web marketing.

- ♦ Generating Tourist Publications.
- ♦ Re-enforced hospitality programmes including grant of air passages to invite the media personnel, tour operators on familiarization tours to India to get first hand knowledge on various tourism products.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) Does not arise.

(d) No, Sir.

(e) Does not arise.

Promotion of Tourism in Assam

2207. SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that tourism traffic in Assam and North Eastern Region has increased;

(b) if so, whether Government propose to promote tourism in Assam and include it in the tourism map; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM (SHRIMATI RENUKA CHOWDHURY): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) Development and promotion of tourism is primarily the responsibility of the State Governments/UTs. Ministry of Tourism provides financial assistance for the tourism projects identified in consultation with the State concerned after ensuring their viability.

Ministry of Tourism has been supporting State Government of Assam for development of tourism infrastructure and during first two years of the Tenth Five-year Plan, Rs. 1081.59 lakh has been sanctioned for this purpose. The process of identification of projects for 2004-05 is under progress.

Sale of Public. Sector Hotels

† 2208. SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD:
SHRI RAM JETHMALANI:

Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.